

f. ♂ ad. Deelfontein, Aug. 6, 1902.

g. ♂; h, i. ♀ pull. Deelfontein, Sept. 23, 1902.

The young birds agree with the description given by Mr. Hargitt. They are very much like the adults, but duller red underneath, and have the fore-neck and chest mottled with ashy bars, and the light bands on the tail wider and more irregular.

[This Woodpecker was fairly common in the mountains, resembling our Green Woodpecker in most of its habits. It is very active in its ways, and is rather shy, with a cry like the alarm-note of the "Klip-bok." Two or three eggs were found in a hole made in a "sluit"-wall; there was no lining to the nest, which seemed to have been made by the birds themselves.]

[To be continued.]

## II.—*The Birds of Nakl Island, on the Coast of Syria.*

By J. H. STENHOUSE, M.B., R.N., H.M.S. 'Hotspur.'

ALONG the coast of Palestine and Syria outlying islands are few and far between, and suitable breeding-places for sea-birds are correspondingly scarce. However, at Tripoli in Syria, a line of coral-reefs runs out from the harbour to form the southern border of the bay, and, after being interrupted by a narrow deep-water channel, terminates, five miles from the town, in three small islands. The largest of these is Nakl, the other two are called Sanani and Ramkine, the last having a lighthouse on it. Of these three islands, Nakl (twenty feet high, circular in shape, and about five hundred yards across) and Sanani are composed of coral-rock and sand, and are covered with a fair growth of coarse grasses and *Salsola*, while Ramkine is forty feet high, rocky, and much more bare.

I have visited Nakl Island on two occasions: the first time on July 4th, 1893, and the second on June 20, 1895, both during stays of the Mediterranean Fleet at Tripoli. In the summer months the *imbat* or sea-breeze blows daily

very strongly, and as the islands are then dead to windward of the anchorage, the journey out in a small sailing-boat is not altogether a pleasure. My first visit was, on account of this beat to windward, very short; but on the second occasion, when I was accompanied by Lieut. (now Commander) Farquhar and Lieut. Cochrane, of H.M.S. 'Hawke,' we made the voyage in a very crank native boat, and managed to spend the whole afternoon on this and the neighbouring island Sanani, and, though much annoyed by mosquitoes, we were amply rewarded by the results. I was in hopes, when recently serving on the Mediterranean Station, of having an opportunity of revisiting the islands during the breeding-season, but was disappointed. However, they are well worth exploration by any bird-lover who may pass that way, being not only what may prove to be the most easterly breeding-place of the rarest of our European Gulls, but also, probably, the northernmost locality for the Arabian representative of the Lesser Tern, as well as for another Red-Sea species, the Allied Tern.

The birds observed on these islands were:—

1. MOTACILLA ALBA.

A family-party of these Wagtails was found on an outlying piece of coral-rock on Nakl Island, and one which was shot proved to be an adult male in breeding-plumage. The young birds had evidently not long left the nest, which we found in a crevice of the coral. It contained an infertile egg of the brown variety, which measured  $\cdot 83'' \times \cdot 61''$ . Some of these Wagtails were also seen on Sanani. I have no doubt that the abundance of mosquitoes is the chief inducement which keeps them on the islands.

2. SYLVIA RUEPELLI.

A male of this species was picked up on my first visit to Nakl; it had probably died on migration north.

3. LARUS AUDOUINI.

On my first visit several Gulls were seen, though none were obtained, and their breeding-place was not discovered; but on the second occasion we found the nesting-place of a colony

on the south-east part of Nakl Island, among a growth of *Salsola*. The season for eggs was over, but many young birds almost ready to fly were found hiding among the herbage, while others were on the wing. The old birds were very bold, and one was shot for identification. The nests were constructed of grasses and were placed among the *Salsola* branches. Two addled eggs were found, and one (which I still possess) measured  $2.45'' \times 1.82''$ , being practically the same size as the eggs of a clutch which I obtained on the Vacca Rock, Sardinia, two years ago. The colony appeared to consist of about fifteen pairs. Both here and on the Vacca Rock I noticed much whitewash round the nests of this bird; they are far dirtier in this respect than those of the Mediterranean Herring-Gull.

#### 4. LARUS CACHINNANS.

Larger Gulls, which were seen but not obtained, were probably of this species. Their nesting-place was not discovered, but they may breed on Ramkine, as several were observed flying over that island, which was not visited.

#### 5. STERNA FLUVIATILIS.

The Common Tern was found in abundance on both visits to Nakl. Very few of the nests had three eggs, many had two, and a considerable number only one; but it is possible that many of the eggs had been taken by the fishermen before our visits. Near the harbour, on the inner reef, a few rocks rise above the surface, and there this bird also breeds abundantly. On July 4th all the eggs were incubated; on June 20th the majority were fresh. Specimens of this bird were shot on both visits.

#### 6. STERNA SAUNDERSI Hume (Cat. B. xxv. p. 120).

This Arabian representative of the Lesser Tern was exceedingly abundant on Nakl, and as the boat approached the island the birds rose in a cloud from the shore. On Sanani they were, if anything, more plentiful. We found numerous nests, two being the usual number of eggs in a clutch. The nests were on the sand above high-water mark, a very few being found away from the actual beach. The

eggs averaged  $1.23'' \times .9''$  in size. On both visits specimens of the birds were shot for identification.

It would be interesting to know where the actual line of demarcation between the habitats of this species and *Sterna minuta* occurs. The nearest place to this where I have taken the Lesser Tern's eggs is in that paradise of waders and sea-birds between Salonica and the mouth of the Vardar River, and *there* the species is *Sterna minuta*. I believe that *S. minuta* also breeds in the salt-marshes to the west of Smyrna, but I have not visited that place.

7. STERNA MEDIA Horsf. (Cat. B. xxv. p. 86).

On my second visit two pairs of this Tern were seen and one individual was shot. Two nests were found, each with a single egg, quite fresh. Our attention was first drawn to the presence of this species by finding an egg, and then, on waiting, one of the birds, easily recognised as distinct by its yellow bill, came hovering over us.

8. ANAS BOSCAS.

A female of this Duck was shot on my first visit. It was flushed from amongst some thick grass.

III.—*Ornithological Journal of a Voyage round the World in the 'Valhalla' (November 1902 to August 1903)*. By M. J. NICOLL, M.B.O.U.

(Plate I.)

IN October last I received a kind invitation from the Earl of Crawford, F.R.S., to accompany him, as Naturalist, during his proposed cruise to the South Pacific, through the Straits of Magellan, in his yacht 'Valhalla,' R.Y.S.

The 'Valhalla,' a full-rigged ship with auxiliary steam, 1700 tons displacement, left Cowes on November 19th, 1902. The last birds that I saw in English waters were a number of Black Scoters (*Edemia nigra*), which we observed just before we reached the Needles. Early on Nov. 20th we passed Ushant and entered the Bay. It was very much warmer